

“Unintentional Maintenance Oversight”

By Rubel Shelly



**F-117A Nighthawk,
the stealth fighter**

A five-member Air Force panel finished its investigation into the crash of an F-117A. Better known as the stealth fighter, one of these state-of-the-art jets literally came apart in the sky on September 14, 1997. The pilot parachuted to safety and no one in the Baltimore suburb where the plane crashed was hurt.

The specific fighter in question had been repaired and checked out thoroughly in January of 1996. As part of that maintenance check, the wings were removed and reinstalled. The inspectors apparently failed to install four of the five bolts that hold part of the wing assembly in place. Two later maintenance checks missed the same problem. One of those checks was prompted when a pilot who had flown the jet reported there was too much “flex” in the wing.

Col. John Beard, head of the investigative panel, said, “It is my opinion the accident was caused by unintentional maintenance oversight.”

For the lack of four fastener bolts, a \$42-million stealth fighter crashed. Because of careless maintenance, the life of a pilot was nearly lost. On account of someone’s “unintentional” oversight, dozens more on the ground were put in jeopardy. It seems like a terribly high price for so trivial a thing as four bolts.

The same sort of thing happens all the time. A company fails because it doesn’t stay abreast of market research or product development. A once-bright career goes down the tubes because an athlete didn’t control his temper or because a junior executive was guilty of an ethical lapse.

Sadder still, all of us have known marriages to fail because of one or both partners’ “unintentional maintenance oversight.” He didn’t pay attention to her. She didn’t seem interested in him. Oh, there were occasional signs of trouble, but they weren’t pursued aggressively enough to repair the relationship properly. So one day the marriage came apart and crashed—maiming both adults and kids.

And what of your personal spiritual life? A well-maintained heart is loving, joyful, and forgiving. It speaks truth and lives with honor. It longs for God as a deer pants for water in a dry place (Psalm 41:1). Prayer is natural, and Scripture is precious.

It would be wise to begin this week by checking the maintenance logs. Be thorough. Leave no stone unturned. And be bold in addressing the deficiencies. God wants you to fly, not crash and burn.



Crash of stealth fighter, September 14, 1997 (Courtesy of CNN.)

When a maintenance check is needed ...

Quotes by David Brandt Berg

- The Lord wants us to be happy, but there should be times when you are not satisfied with just the usual run of things, when you really seek the Lord for a needed change and pray, pouring out your heart to the Lord.
- You must learn to make personal contact with the power of God to let Him do the work of bringing you joy, health, and happiness.
- There’s always hope if there’s love and prayer!